

Rep. Lofgren Joins Members of Congress to Address Immigration Petition Backlog

Calls on Citizenship and Immigration Services to Develop Plan

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Washington, DC- Congresswoman Lofgren today joined 43 members of Congress, representing 18 states, in sending a letter to Eduardo Aguirre, Jr., Director of Citizenship and Immigration Services, expressing concern over the immigration petition backlog and requesting a plan to eliminate the backlog.

The bipartisan group of Congressional Members signing the letter represents districts in the following states, indicates that this issue concerns constituents across the country: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Tennessee, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin.

The following is the text of the letter:

June 15, 2004

Director Eduardo Aguirre, Jr.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Washington, D.C.

Dear Director Aguirre:

In a recent hearing before the House Subcommittee on Immigration, you stated that you are currently developing a new plan to eliminate the growing immigration petition backlog. The Los Angeles Times also reported that the plan will shortly be completed and sent to Congress. We write to you today to express our anticipation for that report and, more importantly, a report on any progress you have made in reducing and eventually eliminating the backlog.

As you know, CIS recently reported that more than 6 million immigration petitions awaited processing in 2003. This is a 90% increase over the backlog in 1997 and almost a 20% increase from 2002. In addition, the Los Angeles Times reported that processing times have doubled and tripled for "green cards," naturalization, and employer petitions between 2001 and 2003. The processing time for a "green card" was almost three years in 2003.

We understand that the President initiated a five-year plan in 2001 to eliminate the backlog and reach a six-month processing goal by 2006. We also understand the difficult consequences of increased security screening due to 9/11 and the recent transition of immigration services to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). We thus recognize that the

five-year backlog reduction initiative developed before 9/11 needs to be revised.

Unfortunately, more than two years after 9/11 we have, as of yet, to see a new and/or revised plan of action on the backlog. Instead, all we see are increasing backlogs. Thus, we ask that you provide us with the details of such a plan, your new deadlines for reaching the six-month goal for processing petitions, and any progress you have made on that plan.

We look forward to working with you on this very important issue. As you know, each one of these backlogged petitions represent a citizen, U.S. employer, or legal permanent resident waiting years for a response from their government on behalf of a family member or employee. Our constituents shouldn't have to wait any longer.

Sincerely,

Zoe Lofgren (CA -16) Marsha Blackburn (TN - 07)

Jan Schakowsky (IL-09) Adam B. Schiff (CA - 29)

Dennis Moore (KS - 03) Joe Baca (CA -43)

Jeff Flake (AZ - 06) Pete Stark (CA -13)

Robert Wexler (FL -19) Anna Eshoo (CA -14)

Lloyd Doggett (TX -10) Patrick J. Tiberi (OH - 12)

Mark Udall (CO - 02) Ed Case (HI - 02)

Hilda Solis (CA -32) Michael M. Honda (CA - 15)

Melissa Hart (PA - 04) Karen McCarthy (MO - 05)

Michael E. Capuano (MA - 08) Loretta Sanchez (CA - 47)

Jim Moran (VA - 08) Edolphus Towns (NY - 10)

Jerry Kleczka (WI - 04) Howard L. Berman (CA - 28)

Henry A. Waxman (CA - 30) George Miller (CA - 07)

Lynn Woolsey (CA - 06) Luis V. Gutierrez (IL - 04)

Howard Coble (NC - 06) Bob Filner (CA - 51)

David Price (NC - 04) Martin Frost (TX - 24)

Diane E. Watson (CA - 33) Sam Farr (CA - 17)

Betty McCollum (MN - 04) Tammy Baldwin (WI - 02)

Stephanie Tubbs Jones (OH - 11) Linda T. Sanchez (CA - 39)

Jim McDermott (WA - 07) Ellen O. Tauscher (CA - 10)

Grace F. Napolitano (CA - 38) Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX - 28)

William Delahunt (MA - 10) Jim Turner (TX - 02)